

FLEAS 101

WHAT ARE FLEAS?

Fleas are small parasitic insects that commonly feed on the blood of animals. To the naked eye, fleas and flea eggs can look like specks of dirt or reddish-brown spots. They can infect both humans and animals alike, causing extreme skin irritation.



WHY SHOULD I WORRY?

- Fleas can cause serious discomfort to your pet resulting in excessive scratching, chewing, and biting of the skin. They are the source of flea allergy dermatitis. Severe flea infestations can cause anemia and/or transmit infections or tapeworm to pets.
- Fleas spend an entire life cycle on your pet. Females can lay hundreds of eggs in just one day, resulting in infestations throughout your pet and your home, making it difficult to treat.
- Fleas cannot fly. Instead, they have an incredible jumping ability, being able to leap from the ground directly onto your pet. It is important to note that fleas don't just come from outside. They can reside on the sides of human shoes, clothing, etc. and enter your home that way.
- Fleas thrive in warm environments yet remain a year-round issue. During the warmer seasons, they can be found outdoors (e.g., grass, concrete, outdoor furniture). During the cooler seasons, they can be found indoors (e.g., cracks of floorboards, carpets).

HOW TO TREAT AN EXISTING FLEA PROBLEM

ON YOUR PET:

1. **Kill on contact.** Use a flea comb to thoroughly check your pet's skin for fleas and remove them with your fingers or hemostats. Fleas like to hid in warm, moist areas, so check areas like your pet's ears and tail. Fleas can move very quickly around your pet's fur, so once you pick one up, immediately crush it with your fingernails and drown it in a bowl of soapy water.
2. **Flea shampoo and Capstar treatment.** Flea shampoos and oral pills (e.g., Capstar) will kill adult fleas that are currently on your pet. They do not, however, kill the eggs and/or larvae that has already taken inhabitation. These must be combed out by hand.
3. **Oral and spot treatments.** Oral and spot treatments attack the flea's nervous system. They kill all adult fleas, attack larvae, and prevent eggs from hatching.

IN YOUR HOME:

1. **Locate** heavily infested areas and concentrate efforts on these areas.
2. **Wash** throw rugs, pet bedding and toys in hot water.
3. **Vacuum** upholstered furniture, beneath cushions, in-between cracks and crevices, and carpets. Continue to vacuum carpets for at least 1-2 weeks to kill adult fleas that continue to emerge from pupal cocoons.

FLEA PREVENTION

- **Frontline** (spot treatment) and **Nexgard** (oral treatment) are examples of effective treatments that protect against fleas, flea eggs, and ticks. These treatments are only effective for a month, so ongoing monthly treatments are necessary and essential.
- **Natural flea sprays** are natural alternatives made of essential oils that help repel fleas. Simply spray your pet's fur, legs, and stomach and generously work it into their coat before going outdoors. You may also want to spray around your pet's bedding and areas near doorways to repel fleas.